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III. *Remarks on the Effects of stagnant Air.* By EBENEZER BEARDSLEY, Surgeon of the 22d Regiment of the American Army, in the Campaign of 1776.

ABOUT the beginning of April, 1776, the *American* army, under the command of his Excellency General *Washington*, marched from *Boston* for *New-York*, at which place they arrived near the middle of the month. The sick and invalids having been left behind, the whole army were in perfect health. They took up their quarters in the barracks and houses of the citizens, 'till about the first of May, when they all went into tents, except the 22d regiment, under the command of Colonel *Samuel Wyllys*, who, for want of tents, continued in their quarters in *Smith-Street*. This regiment was very healthy until about the middle of the month, when upwards of one hundred of the men were taken down with the dysentery in the space of one week. Such a sudden invasion of this formidable disease alarmed me greatly. As I found upon enquiry that there was not a single dysenteric patient besides, in the whole army, I concluded that the disease arose from some cause peculiar to the city : but after a careful enquiry, I could not find that there was a single inhabitant in the whole city that was sick with the distemper. Those who lived in the same street, and many of them in the same houses with us, were entirely free from this, or indeed any other disease. For several days I was much perplexed, and greatly at a loss as to the cause. At length I observed that not only the citizens with whom we lived were free from the disease, but that some whole companies of the same regiment had nothing of it. This led me to consider more minutely the situation and circumstances of those who were sick; all of whom, I found, lived either in

low

low underground rooms, or else in garrets, so situated as not to admit of a free circulation of air. The rooms were also considerably less in proportion to the number of men than usual. Struck with these discoveries, I concluded at once, that the disease arose from a confined stagnant air; deprived by this means of its natural elasticity, and loaded with putrid *effluvia* from the bodies of the unhappy people who lived in it. Having communicated my discoveries to the Colonel, I requested that the men, (both sick and well) might be removed out of those rooms into such as were more airy and capacious. This measure was attended with the most salutary consequences. Those who were sick recovered in a short time, except one or two that died; and no more being seized with the disease, in a few weeks the regiment became entirely healthy. There was nothing peculiar in the symptoms which attended the disease, except, as is usual in vernal distempers, that there was a greater degree of inflammation than commonly attends autumnal disorders of the same *genus*. The discovery of this singular instance of the pernicious effects of confined stagnant air, was of great use to me in the course of the campaign. In the months of July and August, the dysentery, bilious and other fevers of the putrid kind, became very rife both in the army and country. Great pains were taken to procure for our men who were sick with any of those disorders, large rooms, and to have them well ventilated. Yet, under these circumstances, I frequently observed, that (*ceteris paribus*) the sick who lay in and near the corners of the rooms, were handled much more severely than those which lay in the middle of them.

I do not remember to have met with this observation before, but it is undoubtedly of great importance in the treatment of dysenteries and other putrid diseases.

